



# LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

August 24, 2018

Linda McMillian  
McMillian's First Steps CCDC  
2601 S. Claiborne Avenue  
New Orleans, LA 70125

Dear Ms. McMillian:

The Louisiana Department of Education (“LDOE”) takes the integrity of the state testing process very seriously. During the 2016-17 and 2017-18 state testing cycles, significant deficiencies were discovered in the administration of the LEAP test at McMillian’s First Steps.

## **2016-17**

In the spring of 2017, the LDOE received an anonymous report of cheating on the LEAP test. In response, the LDOE and Office of the State Inspector General (OIG) conducted a series of interviews with McMillian’s staff and students which produced the following findings:

- One staff member who served as a test administrator admitted to not being trained in test security or administration.
- During the investigation LDOE and OIG staff interviewed multiple groups of McMillian’s students. In these interviews, 21 students self-identified that they had not cheated on state tests without being prompted by the LDOE and OIG. This high number of similar unprompted responses indicated that these students had likely been prepared by McMillian’s staff to answer that way.

As a result of these findings, McMillian’s was required to take a series of corrective actions including:

- Testing all students in 2017-18 within one calendar week; and
- Contracting with an LDOE-approved third party vendor to conduct on-site test monitoring for each day of LEAP 2025 testing for the spring 2018 test administration.

## **2017-18**

On June 15, 2018, LDOE’s Office of Academic Policy and Analytics sent a letter indicating that McMillian’s was found by the LDOE to have committed testing violations. Specifically:

- A test administrator allowed a student to work on the test after time was called; and
- A test administrator’s eyes remained closed for a period of ten minutes during testing, at which point an independent monitor observed one student engaging another student for help on the test.

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The LDOE's Office of Portfolio followed this letter with a Notice of Violation of the Scholarship Participation Guide on June 21, 2018 for failure to conduct all assessments in accordance with Bulletin 118. LDOE staff met with school administrators on July 6<sup>th</sup> to discuss these violations.

After that meeting, through a forensic review of LEAP 2025 at all schools, the following additional concerns were discovered:

- For the second consecutive year, McMillian's students exhibited a rate of changing answers from wrong to right that was above the state average; and
- 69% of students received ELA read aloud accommodations, a significantly higher rate than the state average of 10%. When the LDOE Assessment team asked McMillian's staff to provide Individual Accommodations Plans or Individualized Education Plans supporting these accommodations in a letter dated July 31, 2018, McMillian's did not respond.

Most importantly, McMillian's violated one of the requirements put into place by LDOE given problems with 2016-17 testing. Testing was supposed to be limited to a single week, the dates of testing communicated to LDOE, and a third-party monitor present each day of testing in 2018.

It was discovered that thirteen of 42 students, including all 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders, were tested outside of the one-week assessment window communicated to LDOE and monitored by Caveon Test Security, a violation of the requirements put into place due to the 2016-17 infractions at McMillian's.

These additional findings and the findings from 2016-17 and 2017-18 exhibit a pattern of behavior at McMillian's that indicates the school is unable to administer assessments in accordance with Bulletin 118 and LDOE requirements. The LDOE requests that you submit a written response to these findings by August 31, 2018. Upon receipt, staff members at the LDOE will schedule a meeting with McMillian's personnel to discuss further and determine what corrective actions are necessary.

Please contact [REDACTED] with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Laura Hawkins  
Chief of Staff  
Office of School Improvement

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